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General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 17 September 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouteflika (*spoke in French*): Let me at the outset, on behalf of the Algerian delegation, congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the current session of the General Assembly. This is a tribute to your personal qualities and to your country, with which my own has good relations of friendship and cooperation.

I should like also to congratulate Switzerland on its admission to full membership in our Organization. I am sure that that country, so deeply attached to neutrality in international affairs, will offer a valuable contribution to our common quest for world peace, at a time when this peace is so seriously threatened, inter alia by international terrorism. I therefore welcome the Swiss delegation to the Assembly and wish it every success in its work here with us.

Our Assembly will also shortly be admitting to full membership in the United Nations the new State of Timor-Leste. We welcome its brand-new independence. The Timorese people have freely chosen, through the exercise of their right to self-determination, to be the masters of their own fate. We congratulate them once again for having stood firm, and we welcome them and wish them a future of progress, prosperity and peace.

It has been two years now since the historic Millennium Declaration was adopted. In offering a collective response, in a spirit of solidarity, to the challenges facing the world in the areas of peace, security and the eradication of poverty, the international community took a responsible approach to the situation that, given the subsequent events that disrupted and shook the world, make that Declaration seem to have foreshadowed the present.

The tragic events of 11 September 2001, which we commemorated just a few days ago, highlighted the need for a collective response to this global threat of terrorism. For a decade, Algeria has had to face alone this scourge of the modern age. We are glad that there is now greater awareness of this phenomenon within the international community and of the measures that need to be taken to address it.

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Algeria participated in the efforts to conclude the conventions to combat terrorism adopted within the various regional African, Arab and Islamic organizations of which Algeria is a member. Those conventions made a significant contribution to strengthening the international legal framework essential for any action for effective international cooperation in combating terrorism.

We believe that it is a matter of urgency to adopt a comprehensive convention on combating terrorism, which would provide a normative framework for bringing together the various cooperation agreements in the anti-terrorist struggle. We must go beyond our differences in respect of how we define terrorism in seeking one acceptable to all, avoiding ambiguities that we all condemn.

More specifically, we reject any association between Islam and terrorist activities. We cannot equate terrorism with the fight by people who are deprived of their rights — an unequal fight that they are waging with all the resources and weapons available to them.

Because of the excesses committed by the Israeli occupiers, the international community has defined the conditions necessary to bring back a just and lasting peace in Palestine and in the Middle East. The conditions include the rejection of violence, the resumption of negotiations based on the principle of land for peace, and — a cardinal point — the confirmation of the right of the Palestinian people to establish a State within recognized and secure borders, and its corollary, two States — Palestinian and Israeli — living in peace, side by side.

The Beirut Arab initiative offered the outline for such a settlement, based on international law and the principle of land for peace.

That Arab initiative was welcomed by the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the peace process, and it breathed new life into a peace process that had been languishing. Algeria, today as in the past, stands side by side with the Palestinian people in their exemplary struggle for freedom and dignity, which can succeed only when the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people are recognized, including its right to the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital, and a complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967. That is the only way to bring peace, stability and security back to the sensitive region of the Middle East.

In that same region, in Iraq, positive developments have just occurred which give grounds for hope that the logic of war will finally be replaced by the logic of peace. In agreeing to the return to its territory of United Nations inspectors, Iraq has demonstrated that it is committed to cooperating with the international community so that there can be definitive closure on the question of weapons of mass destruction. That was a courageous decision by the Iraqi Government, which must logically lead to the definitive lifting of sanctions, which have hurt the Iraqi people so badly, and to bringing back peace and security to that country and to the region as a whole, in strict respect of the sovereignty and unity of the Iraqi people and of the territorial integrity of its national territory.

Close by Algeria, in Western Sahara, 27 years after the withdrawal of the former colonial Power, the Sahrawi people are still demanding their inalienable right to self-determination, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and to the resolutions that the General Assembly has been adopting and confirming year after year, since it called in 1966 for the decolonization of the territory and for self-determination for the people through a referendum.

The international community cannot remain indifferent to the fate of that people, nor can it accept that the full implementation of the Settlement Plan and of the Huston agreements be postponed time and again.

Algeria, a neighbour to the two brotherly peoples of Morocco and Western Sahara, will continue to do its utmost in the service of international peace and of stability and unity in the subregion. Algeria has fully supported the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, and we have made a significant contribution to the settlement of the conflict. The United Nations — and the Security Council in particular — is dealing with the issue of Western Sahara. Algeria hopes that its relationships with its neighbours will not be jeopardized by this dispute and that the Arab Maghreb Union will be able to resume its activities and develop fruitful cooperation with all the countries in the region.

This session is taking place at a time when globalization is accelerating and an information and communication technologies revolution is under way.

Questions continue to arise about the benefits and challenges of this process and the risks of marginalization and exclusion that it poses for the developing countries, particularly in Africa. This session is of particular significance because it is taking place in the immediate aftermath of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, two events that could prove decisive for the future of international cooperation for sustainable, balanced and equitable development.

While the process that was launched at Monterrey identified how financing is to be mobilized and financial and technical cooperation for development strengthened, the Johannesburg Summit focused on the priority areas of combating poverty and ensuring sustainable development and international cooperation.

The right to development must be the main focus of our concern and efforts to strengthen international cooperation through various innovative partnerships between the North and the South, based on the sharing of responsibilities and benefits. In this connection, I would like to mention the signing this year of the Association Agreement between Algeria and the European Union. That Agreement will provide the foundation for launching a genuine, mutually beneficial partnership.

Problems relating to internationalizing foreign direct investment flows as much as possible, significantly increasing official development assistance, managing the debt burden, opening markets to the products of the South and restructuring the international financial institutions to allow for greater participation by developing countries clearly remain our major concerns, and we need to find solutions to them quickly.

Given the serious crises that are convulsing the world, the establishment of a more equitable international economic and trade order is becoming increasingly important, and will require greater political will on the part of the international community.

The outcome of the most recent World Trade Organization meeting at Doha provided us with an opportunity to set up a more open and transparent multilateral trading system to enable developing countries to increase their share of international trade.

I would also like to refer to the bilateral and multilateral initiatives that have been undertaken to assist developing countries, in particular the least developed among them. I hope that such initiatives will be followed up with other specific steps that can give real meaning to international solidarity and to sustained efforts aimed at building a more humanistic world, free from the seeds of instability and violence.

The world is changing very quickly, resulting in enormous uncertainty about the future of the human race. We note the tendency, in the light of such dangers, to move towards international solidarity, not only in the area of combating terrorism, but also in fighting poverty and preserving the environment. The importance of the role played by the United Nations in finding solutions to the problems facing all of our peoples is becoming increasingly clear. In a world at risk, this Organization is, indeed, irreplaceable, because it symbolizes our common commitment to fight for the survival of humankind.

The achievements of the United Nations are impressive in the areas of promoting peace and security, economic cooperation, social progress, humanitarian activities and the development of international law. The fact that such achievements have been made despite difficulties and inadequate resources is an indication of what the system would be capable of were it fully supported by all Member States.

Efforts to streamline United Nations activities, improve system-wide coordination and ensure coherence in its actions augur well for the enhancement, greater credibility and effectiveness of the Organization.

I should like to pay tribute to the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in this undertaking, which will require a greater commitment on the part of States as well as the provision of more resources.

Strengthening the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations will also require structural reform so as to enable it to better reflect the new face of international society and deal with all of the challenges facing humankind.

In this new millennium, the world will not be able to manage without the United Nations. An Organization that is in tune with the requirements of change in the world today is an indispensable tool in

helping us to build peace and comprehensive sustainable development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Neves (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at this session. We are confident that with your renowned skills and diplomatic experience you will guide the work of Assembly to a very successful conclusion. I assure you that you will be able to count on the full support of the delegation of Cape Verde.

I would like to acknowledge the strong leadership and guidance of you predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, who presided over the Assembly during a particularly difficult time, when important steps were taken to improve the efficiency of the General Assembly with view to reinforcing the role of our Organization in resolving the issues confronting the international community.

Allow me also to convey a special word of appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the wise and capable manner in which he has guided the United Nations, especially in managing the millennium agenda, which has produced particularly important results for the international community, such as the outcomes of the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits.

Cape Verde welcomes the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations. We are sure that Switzerland's presence in the United Nations can only be of to benefit the Organization, given that country's valuable and renowned diplomatic experience.

Likewise, we welcome the forthcoming admission of East Timor to the United Nations. At this time, I am pleased to recall that Cape Verde has always stood by the Timorese people in their struggle for self-determination and independence. That young country and its people have paid a very high price in order to have their right to existence be recognized. It is therefore a duty of the community of nations to mobilize all the support necessary to enable that young democracy to affirm itself and to make up for the decades lost to destruction and violence.

The tragic events that struck vital and emblematic centres in the United States on 11 September 2001 deeply shocked the world. The whole international community mobilized itself and expressed its solidarity with the United States of America, while at the same time adopting measures adjusted to the challenges posed by international terrorism. Cape Verde was among the countries that reacted promptly to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and remains firmly committed to its implementation.

The shockwaves of that catastrophe were felt in all latitudes and affected many different aspects of the relations between States. These are reflected adversely in lack of economic growth; in increased expenditures for defence and security and the consequent impact on the distribution of resources; and in the daily routines of citizens of every country in the world through restrictions on the mobility of people. In certain regions of the world, there is an increased risk of military confrontation that, should it occur, would have immeasurable consequences.

Thus, today, the question of international security has assumed unprecedented importance in the relations between States, and the United Nations is called upon to play a decisive role in its assessment and

management. Diplomatic means should be privileged and pursued in the context of the Security Council.

A safer world is a more just world. It is crucial that the United Nations strengthen its intervention and coordination capacities in international cooperation to promote economic and social development as the guarantee of a climate of peace and security throughout the world. It is impossible to create a climate of peace and security while more than half of the world's population remains subject to poverty, malnutrition, disease and ignorance. The international community has to strengthen its commitment to ensure that the millennium goals are achieved in time to give meaning to the lives of millions of our brothers and sisters, especially those in the least developed countries, who today look to the future without any hope.

At the expense of great efforts, determination and high social cost, many of those countries have implemented the deep reforms required by their bilateral partners and international financial institutions. Regretfully, in many cases, instead of receiving increased support to consolidate the reforms, these countries are being devastated by their debt burden, public development assistance is being gradually reduced and they have yet to enjoy access to foreign private investments. The populations are, however, still waiting for the reforms to produce the promised results.

It was against this backdrop that the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits prompted great expectations, but the results turned out to be relatively modest. Even so, if the consensuses reached at those summits are effectively implemented, they may constitute an important starting point for developing countries. The financial commitments announced in Monterrey and the goals set in Johannesburg in the vital sectors of water and sanitation are a contribution of particular importance to the implementation of the millennium goals. The most important thing now is that the decisions adopted actually be implemented and efforts redoubled in order to reach new consensus in the other sectors essential to the planet's sustainable development.

Cape Verde recognizes the efforts that have been made by the United Nations to foster the development of the least developed countries and small island States. In this regard, we welcome the creation of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in accordance with the decisions of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

Cape Verde has achieved positive results in its struggle for economic and social development. The people of my country have demonstrated an enhanced political maturity that ensures stability and peace and the normal functioning of democratic institutions. Power changes have taken place at both the local and the national levels. The most recent United Nations Human Development Report ranked Cape Verde in a privileged position on the African continent.

However, in spite of significant advances made in the past 20 years at the political, social and economic levels, Cape Verde suffers from a structural imbalance between national production and domestic expenditures that has resulted in a permanent deficit in the balance of current transactions, as well as other economic imbalances. Unemployment is high and poverty affects a significant portion of the population.

The country's development has been marked by advances and setbacks prompted by its natural economic vulnerability as a small island with a lack of natural resources, a weak production base and a strong dependence on external financial flows. These conditions are aggravated by the country's location in the Sahel region, which subjects it to prolonged droughts that weaken the environment.

In light of all this, and given the low rainfall registered to date, we are facing the prospect of another difficult year. This has prompted the Government to adopt emergency measures to alleviate the effects of drought on the most vulnerable. To that end, we have called for the solidarity of all Capeverdeans while, at the same time, we hope to be able to rely on the active support of the international community.

Poverty is another of Cape Verde's limitations and poverty reduction is one of the major challenges facing Capeverdean society. At this time, we are working in collaboration with our bilateral partners and United Nations agencies on medium- and long-term strategies to combat poverty.

In the coming years, the country will have to find rapid and durable solutions in order to maintain the fundamental macroeconomic balances, further and consolidate structural reforms, expand the production

base and create competitive advantages for the economy at both the external and the internal levels — in short, solutions leading to economic growth and a reduction of the unemployment rate. In that context, our efforts are more than ever in need of the proper partnerships and foreign private investment so that we may pursue the country's development process begun with national independence in 1975.

We are pleased to note that some encouraging signs have begun to appear on our continent. There is a fresh wind blowing in Africa. This year, we saw the birth of a new continental organization, the African Union, as well as a new and original partnership, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). With these were also born renewed hopes for a more promising future for the African people. The globally favourable reception to these two African initiatives is a good omen for the continent. Africa thus seems to be on its way towards finding its own path by strengthening its endogenous capacities to resolve the problems inherited from colonization and conflicts often prompted by external interests. Africa seems to be on the way to finding its own path by strengthening its endogenous capacity to resolve the problems inherited from colonization and to settle conflicts often prompted by external interests.

In fact, the African Union and NEPAD are based on a new foundation, as well as a new environment in our continent that is opening new prospects for peace and development. We note with satisfaction the substantial progress made in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Great Lakes region, which points to the definitive resolution of conflicts that a year ago did not seem to have a solution. In that context, we should recognize the important role of the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization for African Unity in seeking solutions to those conflicts, as well as the decisive action that some countries have taken to promote understanding between belligerent parties.

We congratulate the Angolan Government and UNITA on finally having found the solution to a conflict that for many years devastated that country. The political conditions are now in place to carry out the enormous task of national reconstruction. However, the gravity of the humanitarian situation demands substantial support from the international community to help the Angolans find a rapid and suitable solution that will prevent their problems from growing.

The positive signs that could predict a new era for Africa should not cause us to lose sight of the scope and the complexity of the challenges we face, which result from historical circumstances, environmental disasters and an accumulation of human errors. The most recent report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on least developed countries points out that sub-Saharan Africa is poorer today than it was 20 years ago. At the same time, the evaluation of economic progress made in the past decade within the framework of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s is disappointing.

On the other hand, the spread of pandemics, in spite of certain limited success in the fight against them, and the serious food shortages that have affected southern Africa reveal the seriousness and persistence of the problems that Africans must solve.

The fact that United Nations cooperation with Africa is being strengthened is noteworthy. That is attested to by the increased attention being devoted to the continent's problems. Examples are recent Security Council meetings that have focused on the situation in the continent, the creation of an Ad Hoc Advisory Group of the Economic and Social Council on countries emerging from conflict and yesterday's General Assembly meeting devoted to NEPAD. In that context, we would also note some of the decisions stemming from the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits.

It is our hope that this session of the General Assembly will make an important contribution to facing the challenges and will enable the United Nations to strengthen its role as a promoter of peace, understanding and cooperation among all people of the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Maria Pereira Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Samoa

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I take great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Samoa and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly.

Our annual gatherings in this great Hall serve well to reaffirm our commitment to the purposes of the United Nations: the commitment to uphold the principles of the Charter, to assert fundamental human rights and freedoms as we seek to improve social and economic conditions, and to act together in sovereignty in the maintenance of international peace and security. The lessons of history require that nations be united in common effort. There is no other way; not today, in this interdependent, ever globalizing world. Certainly, from the perspective of the very small there is no other way. Indeed, we cannot see how any one country, no matter what its size and power, can completely fend for itself.

War and conflict divide nations. They rage in too many places. Global forces operate to degrade the environment and spread misery through poverty and disease and through the illicit trade in arms, drugs and people. The entire world community is now seriously challenged by the terrible scourges of HIV/AIDS and terrorism. Only through cooperation and multilateral action can we hope to respond, to take countermeasures, to find solutions and to give protection to all.

The monstrous terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 were an assault on values that are fundamental to humanity and to the United Nations. On behalf of my country, I want to renew to the people of the United States our feelings of solidarity and total support. The spirit of the United States was never in doubt. Tested, it has become more resolute in its purpose and courage. It is that spirit that provides global leadership. It is the spirit that unites us all in the struggle against terrorism.

Let me reaffirm our strong support for Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and for the Council's action to implement it. For its part, Samoa has put in place appropriate policies and domestic legislation, and we will review our arrangements as necessary, in keeping with the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Iraq continues to violate Security Council resolutions. It has done so for a considerable time — far too long. We commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his repeated efforts to encourage compliance. We think there must be full compliance with obligations pursuant to Security Council resolutions: compliance without preconditions, without delay.

We welcome the broad acknowledgement in the statements we have heard in this debate that actions that need to be taken will be taken within the framework of the United Nations and under the authority of the Security Council. The news this morning of the likely return of weapons inspectors is a positive development, and we hope it is one of complete seriousness.

Our concern about Iraq reflects in part our very serious concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Those weapons pose an immediate and major threat to international peace and security. The international agreements and systems to control the development and spread of weapons of mass destruction, and to eliminate them, must be strengthened and implemented.

We live in a part of the world where nuclear weapons have been tested and used. Our fear of the consequences is real. That is why we have the Rarotonga Treaty, which declared the South Pacific a nuclear-weapon-free-zone. We call on States that have not yet done so to complete the ratification process of the protocols to the Treaty. And that is why we continue to object to the transportation of nuclear and other radioactive material through the waters of our region.

We are appalled at the suffering of families and communities in the Middle East, and we pray for permanent peace for all. The current situation is a threat of utmost gravity to international peace and security. It calls for efforts of highest priority and urgency to bring an end to the conflict. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2001) provide the basis for a settlement. Those resolutions should be implemented.

My delegation strongly supports the Secretary-General in the ongoing reform of the United Nations. We have all seen good and positive results. Reform to make the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council more effective must continue. Reform of the Security Council calls for particular attention. The issues are sensitive and complex. That is clear. Yet, it is also clear that the Security Council needs to reflect the geopolitical realities of our time. It needs to be properly representative of the international community of today and to be able to function effectively and be secure in its authority.

We applaud the entry into force of the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court. Samoa has now ratified the Statute. The Court will bring to justice those who commit genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is, therefore, a major achievement and a significant step in the protection of human rights and in upholding international humanitarian standards. To that end, the Court deserves all support to allow it the strength of universality and the rule of law. We need to ensure that it is not undermined in any way.

This has been an especially notable year in the international efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals. In March, we achieved the Monterrey Consensus. Earlier this month, we agreed in Johannesburg on a Plan to implement sustainable development in every land. Rightly, the focus is on halving extreme poverty by 2015. The condition of utter misery that condemns so many of our fellow humans worldwide is simply unacceptable. The outstanding leadership of South Africa ensured the success of the Johannesburg Summit. We extend to President Mbeki, to his ministers and to his other colleagues our warm thanks and congratulations.

In this context, let me also congratulate the leadership of Africa on the establishment of the African Union and the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We have joined hands with Africa on other issues, including our endeavours in the context of cooperation between the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union, and I give assurance of our close interest and support.

Speaking in Samoa's capacity as Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States, let me note our particular satisfaction with the provisions in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation dedicated to the sustainable development of small island States. We greatly appreciate the role played by all countries in finding agreement on those provisions. We look forward to their continuing support as we move to prepare for the agreed international meeting in 2004 to review the Barbados Programme of Action. Overcoming the well-recognized vulnerability of small island States, and the exposure of island countries to the effects of global climate change, natural disasters, environmental damage and global economic shocks is fundamental to long-term sustainability in all small island regions.

Climate change poses immediate and the most serious of threats for our communities. Largely by the acts of others, it puts at risk countries like my own that are least responsible for the causes and least able to adapt. In Johannesburg, we were greatly heartened by the declarations from many countries — the Russian Federation, China, India and Canada among them — of their plans to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. This serious problem deserves no less than this type of global solidarity and leadership.

As I close, let me welcome Switzerland upon its having taken up full membership of the United Nations. Switzerland's role and its contribution to the Organization are known to all and are well appreciated.

Let me also voice our satisfaction with the situation in East Timor. It is a success story in every sense: in the determination of its people and in the response of the international community. Samoa is pleased to have been able to contribute to the United Nations peacekeeping effort in that country; we plan to continue doing so. Last month, we welcomed East Timor as an observer to the Pacific Islands Forum. We look forward to its joining the United Nations soon.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister and Minister for

Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland.

Mr. Ásgrímsson (Iceland): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I am confident that you will guide us wisely through the complex tasks ahead.

I would also like to use this opportunity to welcome Switzerland, our long-time friend and partner in the European Free Trade Association, to the United Nations. Furthermore, I would like to express our satisfaction that East Timor will be joining the United Nations later this month. The independence of East Timor is one more example of how, in the end, the purposes and principles of the United Nations prevail.

The vicious and deliberately organized terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September of last year have had global implications. The necessity to fight terrorism and the international commitment and determination to do so have dominated the international arena in the past year. Iceland reaffirms its commitment to cooperate with the United Nations and its Member States, as well as with other relevant international organizations, in the fight against terrorism. To that end, we stress the importance for States to ratify and implement all the relevant legal instruments that together contribute to uprooting that menace.

Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We should aim at concluding the draft comprehensive convention against terrorism during this session of the General Assembly.

On such important issues as peace and stability, it is often difficult to reach decisions and agree on resolutions here in the United Nations, let alone to ensure that they are implemented. Full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions is imperative. It is therefore very encouraging to see that during this session of the General Assembly, we have witnessed that the emerging consensus on how to deal with defiance of Security Council resolutions seems to be having tangible results. Only yesterday, the Iraqi Government informed the United Nations that Iraq has decided to cooperate fully with the Organization and to give weapons inspectors unconditional access to the country. This is certainly a positive sign, but deeds will have to follow.

In a recent visit to the Middle East, my belief was confirmed that there must be a much stronger involvement of the international community in the Middle East and involvement of third parties in the efforts to resolve the dispute there. In this regard, Iceland fully supports the efforts of the Quartet, as well as the Saudi proposals. Negotiations on a political settlement must resume; they must not be held hostage to the situation on the ground. Only a comprehensive peace agreement dealing with all aspects of the dispute will guarantee security and prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The occupation of the Palestinian territories must end, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Iceland strongly supports the two-States solution. Israel and Palestine must live side by side in peace within secure and recognised borders.

Until a peace agreement has been reached, both parties have to play by certain rules. The sanctity of the lives of innocent civilians has to be respected under all circumstances. This means that the Palestinian Authority must reform itself to deal effectively with terror and pave the way for the establishment of a democratic and accountable Palestinian State. Israel also has to respect international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The circumstances on the ground have to change for the better. Otherwise, there is a real danger that the worsening of the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories could lead to a humanitarian disaster.

Iceland strongly welcomes the entry into force of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC). We urge all States that have not already done so to ratify or accede to the Statute with the aim of achieving universality in the fight against impunity for the most serious international crimes.

The ICC certainly is one of the major accomplishments of the international community in strengthening the international legal system. Some

concerns have been voiced with regard to the possible abuse of the Rome Statute. These concerns should be carefully studied with an open mind and without prejudice to the effective functioning of the ICC.

Constant vigilance is needed to ensure respect for human rights and humanitarian law. Our continuous efforts to combat terrorism must not result in any form of human rights violations. All measures taken must be in accordance with international law.

Allow me to dwell on human rights issues affecting women and children. Unfortunately, women's rights are sometimes viewed as a purely social issue rather than a human rights issue. More often than not, women are the prime victims of conflicts. Yet their right to participate on an equal footing in peace negotiations and decision-making processes is still not recognized. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is meant to change this, and its provisions must be implemented and respected.

While progress has been made towards greater gender equality, the situation in many countries is still dire. Trafficking in women has increased, not least in Europe. The resumption of ancient methods of punishment of women in some parts of the world is appalling. Lack of education, information and health care, as well as sexual exploitation, makes women particularly vulnerable to the growing malice of HIV/AIDS.

The well-being of children is our responsibility. All over the world, millions of children suffer because of poverty. They are cruelly exploited as child soldiers or labourers. They do not enjoy their right to education and are deprived of the decent life they are entitled to. Iceland therefore welcomed the special session on children held last spring. The participation of children themselves was especially successful. We need to listen to our children and make every effort to implement the declaration and plan of action of the special session, as well as the international Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Sustainable development has become an integral part of policies and strategies of local and national governments, international organizations, businesses and non-governmental organizations worldwide.

Despite impressive progress made in many fields during the past decade, especially with regard to the environment, millions of people still live in poverty and see little hope of escaping it. It is essential that poorer countries be allowed to enjoy the benefits of their comparative advantages and to put their human resources to work. Trade liberalization and free commerce would be a major contribution to promoting equitable and sustainable growth for the benefit of poorer countries.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, world leaders succeeded in generating commitments for action. This is a major accomplishment. It is now up to each and every one of us to see to it that these commitments are implemented.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At the Summit, Iceland declared its willingness to increase its bilateral development assistance by providing training in the sustainable management of living marine resources and the use of renewable energy resources. A huge step forward in the development and utilization of renewable, clean energy resources is necessary in order to fulfil the commitments laid down in the Kyoto Protocol. Sustainable management and utilization of all living marine resources is essential for food security and hunger alleviation.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is without doubt one of the greatest achievements of this Organization. For a country like Iceland, which is overwhelmingly dependent on the sustainable utilization of living marine resources, the Convention is of paramount importance. In our view, it is highly appropriate that the General Assembly will devote two days during its fifty-seventh session for commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Convention on the Law of the Sea has gained universal participation, and all the three institutions established by it are functioning in an effective manner. We welcome the entry into force last December of the related Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. It is imperative that both the Convention and the Agreement be ratified by those States that have not done so, that they be fully implemented and that their integrity be preserved.

In the Millennium Declaration we resolved to strengthen the United Nations system in order to make it more effective. In this context the revitalization of the General Assembly is important. Reform measures such as the clustering of agenda items and, most recently, the election in advance of the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees, are steps in the right direction. However, we must strive to deepen the reforms on the basis of the Millennium Declaration.

In many crisis situations in this past year, as so often before, the Security Council has proven effective and fulfilled a task satisfactorily. However, we must not forget that the reform of the Security Council remains an issue that needs to be resolved. The Council's efficiency in coping with the serious issues on its agenda must be further secured by making necessary changes and adjustments with regard to its composition and working methods.

It is essential that the membership of the Council fairly reflect the whole membership of the United Nations. It is also important to further enhance the transparency in the decision-making process. In order to move the reform work forward, all Member States must show flexibility and willingness to compromise.

We continue to face serious threats to international peace and stability. The best way to preserve the peace and work for prosperity and democracy in the world is to be steadfast in working in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of its organs. No nation shall be allowed to destroy this common endeavour.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Jigmi Yoser Thinley, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): We have before us an array of issues that are as compelling and daunting as ever before. Many of these threaten to widen further the divides that separate us and deepen more the wounds that pain us. They challenge ever so severely our resolve to live in peace and harmony. But we remain hopeful. Under the President's leadership and guidance, we are confident that our deliberations will be purposeful and productive. Toward this, I assure the President of the full cooperation of my delegation.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo for his stewardship and contribution to the work of the fifty-sixth session. His presidency, at a most challenging time in the history of the United Nations, has enhanced the esteem of the international community for him and the Republic of Korea.

My delegation takes great pleasure in welcoming the Swiss Confederation and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste as they take their rightful place in our family of nations. While we welcome the admission of Timor-Leste as a newly independent State, it is with a sense of deep satisfaction that we appreciate the decision of the Swiss people. It is an affirmation of their faith in the relevance and indispensability of the United Nations. They, more than any other people, have observed and studied with active participation the workings of this world body. As a country for which the United Nations will always be critically important, Bhutan is indeed deeply heartened.

The loss of lives and untold suffering and destruction wrought by the senseless acts of 11 September have united all of humanity against the evil of terrorism in all its manifestations. No clear orientation towards international peace and development is possible without uprooting this disease that has been allowed to afflict many of our societies.

The United Nations must continue to play a central and decisive role in directing our collective resolve and efforts to eradicate terrorism. While in our own countries we must each take all possible measures to rid ourselves of this menace, we know that it is through the multilateral framework that our national, regional and global efforts can be effectively and rightly coordinated. It is imperative that in our battle against terrorism, the norms and principles of this hallowed institution are not undermined. Our war on terrorism must continue to unite us.

The realization of a new economic order that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable remains the most pressing challenge of the United Nations. The scourge of poverty and disease continue to afflict millions of people around the world. My delegation is compelled to reiterate its concern over the decline in official development assistance (ODA) and the parallel emphasis on market efficiency and trade as an engine of growth.

We realize that trade underpins equal partnership and should represent the ultimate goal of economic development strategies. However, not all countries

have the necessary capacity to take advantage of the global trading system. Without timely and adequate assistance to fill the resource gap to meet their basic development priorities, many of the developing countries will continue to suffer from marginalization.

Clearly, there is a need to create a fair and equitable trading environment without prejudice to the flow of adequate Official Development Assistance. In particular, the special needs and vulnerabilities of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states must be comprehensively addressed to enable them to effectively integrate into the global economic system. In Africa, the international community must lend its full support to extricate the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and to prevent its further marginalization. In this context, Bhutan welcomes the endorsement of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development by the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly and hopes that the international community will provide the necessary support to this programme. This is particularly significant for those countries emerging from conflict, in which the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure is vital if peace is to be sustained.

There is no lack of vision and strategies to overcome the socio-economic maladies that confront the global community. The Millennium Declaration Goals provide clear targets and strategies to reduce poverty, achieve sustainable development and reverse the devastating trend of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. What we need is greater political will.

I wish to acknowledge the contributions of the United Nations and bilateral donors to the development of my country. We are grateful to our partners not only for the substantial amount of assistance we have received over the years, but for the acceptance of our insistence on being the master of our own destiny. Our partnership is characterized by a frank and open political dialogue of high intensity, while the cooperative arrangements at all levels are marked by a notable degree of transparency.

My country continues to be guided by our goal of promoting "gross national happiness" as opposed to simply targeting the enhancement of our gross national product as the end of development. We believe that it is the responsibility of the Government to create an enabling environment within which every citizen would have a reasonable opportunity to find happiness. Towards this end, all our development strategies must subscribe to strengthening of the four pillars of gross national happiness, which are: first, the ensuring of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development; secondly, conservation of our fragile mountain ecology; thirdly, promotion of basic human values and culture; and fourthly, the strengthening of good governance.

It is my belief that those are the pillars on which the happiness of our human society can be firmly established. While I am fully aware that Bhutan is certainly not unique in its pursuit of happiness, I express the hope that more among us will join in that search with a greater sense of seriousness.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tonino Picula, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Croatia.

Mr. Tonino Picula (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to sincerely congratulate Mr. Kavan on his election to the position of President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am confident that under his able leadership the work of the Assembly will be conducted in a most productive manner. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the successful completion of the work of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to use this opportunity to warmly congratulate Switzerland on becoming a full member of the United Nations family and to welcome the return of the United States to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Following the horrific terrorist attacks of 11 September last year, there have emerged a new vigour and resolve to make our world a safer place for all, not only in promises but in deeds.

General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, especially Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), serve as a common platform for combating terrorism. However, their letter and spirit must be fully and thoroughly implemented in order to rid ourselves of global terrorist threats. In our endeavours, the United Nations is proving to be the best framework and unique pillar for the international community's joint actions in maintaining international peace and security, as well as in providing legitimacy to these actions.

The prompt and almost universal response of Member States to the requests of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee is a telling example of how efficient the United Nations can be in mobilizing the international community in facing common challenges. It is our hope that Member States will respond with the same sense of responsibility in another important aspect of eradicating terrorism: to finalize current negotiations on the comprehensive convention on combating international terrorism.

Furthermore, Croatia believes that efforts should be intensified to resolve regional conflicts that offer fertile ground for recruiting terrorists. The cycle of violence in the Middle East must end. Parties to the conflict must return to the negotiating table and make a reality of the vision of two peoples living in peace within secure and recognized State borders.

We also call for Iraq's full compliance with its international obligations regarding the possession and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Violations of Security Council resolutions must not be tolerated, and we welcome the decision by President Bush to work with the United Nations Security Council in this regard.

We must also recognize that today Afghanistan is on a difficult yet hopeful road to recovery with the assistance of the international community.

We fully support the Secretary-General in his efforts to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to one of prevention. We consider that the timely dispatch of well-structured peacekeeping operations with a clear and effective mandate can prevent the recurrence of conflicts and create a platform for rebuilding peace and shattered societies. It is exactly here that new tasks and challenges lie for contemporary peacekeeping operations, whose birth we have witnessed in East Timor and Kosovo. In this regard, we welcome the Security Council's new approach of having regular meetings with troop-contributing countries. As a contributor of military observers in peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Eritrea and recently in Kashmir, Croatia has found that exchange of information and experience most fruitful and useful for all.

That brings me to the subject of Security Council reform, which, as all of us agree, is necessary to address the new political environment of the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, we have still not achieved sufficient political consensus for significant progress in this respect. The lack of progress is certainly discouraging for many. Nevertheless, we must reform the Council in order to be able to adequately address the security threats we are facing today.

As we revisit the historic promises made by our world leaders, enshrined in the Millennium Declaration, we must now embark on a process of improving the United Nations as an instrument of global co-operation for the benefit of all humankind. In this regard, we commend the Secretary-General for his report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcome of the major United Nations conferences and summits, as a necessary prerequisite to implementing the goals set in the Millennium Declaration. To that end, the full and constant co-operation of Member States and the Secretariat is essential.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Economic and Social Council has continued on the path of strengthening its role within the United Nations system. A number of innovative precedents have been set this year related to the improvement of cooperation and coordination among many bodies of the United Nations and between the Economic and Social Council and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and to the Council's cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The resolution concerning the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries emerging from conflicts was adopted to help such countries in their peace-building processes. Guinea-Bissau has already submitted an official request for the establishment of such an Ad Hoc Advisory Group for its own country. Croatia is pleased that it can contribute, through the President of the Economic and Social Council, to the revival and strengthening of that highly important body.

The United Nations should continue to keep development at the forefront of all areas on the Organization's substantive agenda. Among all multilateral organizations, the United Nations is the only one with the institutional capability to address and manage the challenges of globalization. The Croatian delegation hopes that the outcome and follow-up of the conferences held at Monterrey and Johannesburg will keep our commitment on track, in particular with regard to mobilizing additional financial resources. We

must work together to improve the lives of people in poverty and to reverse the continuing degradation of the global environment. A truly global mobilization of all relevant stakeholders will be necessary to ensure that the outcomes of those conferences are transformed into reality.

We note the broader acceptance by Member States of United Nations norms, which will ultimately lead to the globalization of human rights and to a universally recognized international code of human rights. As Governments, we must provide the environment for the universal acceptance and full implementation of such rights. Croatia is contributing to that goal through its membership in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Global contributions comprise individual achievements. In order to contribute to global peace, security and development, each country must be stable and secure and must function on a well-founded economic system. My Government is doing exactly that. In October last year, Croatia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. Over the past two years, we have introduced a set of reforms aimed at bringing Croatian society closer to the European Union and to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The commitment of the Croatian Government in that respect was recognized by the European Commission. In its first report on the stabilization and association process, issued this past spring, Croatia was singled out as the country most advanced in the process.

Another important element in that regard is regional cooperation, in which Croatia plays a very active role. The outstanding issues that may reflect on the region's stability, such as the return of refugees, are high on my Government's priority list. Therefore, Croatia has adopted an action plan for the voluntary return of refugees through the end of the next year.

We have significantly improved bilateral relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and will continue to do so. In the light of the discussion between the two delegations held just a few days ago, I believe that the remaining open issues will be successfully resolved in the near future. One of those issues is the identification and delimitation of the land and sea border in the area of Prevlaka. Intensive negotiations are under way, and we believe that some form of temporary solution may be reached soon. In any event, the situation concerning Prevlaka no longer represents a threat to peace and security, and therefore we believe that the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka has successfully accomplished its mandate and that, consequently, that mandate should not be extended after it expires.

With regard to border issues, I would like to report an important success: an agreement on the northern part of our border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. That agreement was reached through the valuable efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whom we sincerely thank. At this point, shortly before the end of the United Nations presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to express my Government's appreciation for the Organization's overall contribution to the stability and development of that country.

On the other hand, we cannot fail to express our deep frustration at the continued failure to apprehend two of the most notorious war criminals to date: Karadzić and Mladić. We strongly reiterate the view that lasting stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be achieved only with the arrest of Karadzić and Mladić and with their extradition to the appropriate authorities. Bringing those two individuals to trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia would serve to provide closure for many victims who suffered terribly. The same goes for Sljivančanin and Radić, indicted by the Tribunal for war crimes committed on Croatian territory.

Having faith in the maxim "No peace without justice", my Government attaches the highest importance to bringing to justice all those guilty of war crimes. We are committed to maintaining the good and extensive cooperation that we have established with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and we urge other countries within its mandate to do so. However, that does not diminish the key role that domestic war crimes trials play in the process of healing and national reconciliation. The Croatian judiciary is ready and willing to meet these challenges.

In that spirit, the Republic of Croatia welcomed the entry into force of the Rome Statute and looks forward to the operationalization of the International Criminal Court. The establishment of the first such permanent Court is crucial in putting an end to the culture of impunity and selective justice. By

strengthening the universal rule of law, which in turn leads to the advancement of universal peace and security, the new Court holds the promise of becoming a true guarantor of the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Our fundamental and common interests in world peace, security and development require our concerted and united efforts. I am confident that this fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly will take us a step further in realizing those common goals.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ana Palacio, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

Ms. Palacio (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The world has changed since the Assembly last met. The twenty-first century began on 11 September 2001, and our great collective challenge is to ensure the primacy of the rule of law in the sphere of international relations. The natural forum for that legal culture and legitimacy is the United Nations.

In that context and with that ambition, participating in the great objectives of peace, the rule of law and the preservation of the international order — to which the Secretary-General referred during the current session — it is an honour for me to address the Assembly on behalf of Spain, also a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Should we be elected, we are determined to devote all the effort and resources necessary to fulfil that great responsibility.

A year ago, the entire world became aware of the horror of terrorism that threatens us all. We asked ourselves then what course the international community should take and what role the United Nations should play in shaping international relations in the twenty-first century. Uncertainty remains, but it is now clear that interdependence among countries and regions will be the centre of gravity of a newborn international civil society. States must cooperate with one another to make use of opportunities and to fight against threats, because neither opportunities nor threats have a purely local character.

Thus, it is time for the rule of law, and the United Nations, as the seat of the political and normative legitimacy of international society, is called to be the centre of gravity of this new framework. The United Nations is the organization that can and should impose — including through the use of force, if it is unavoidable — the decisions taken collectively by the community of States.

The occasions on which the United Nations has been able to respond to the demands of the international community have also been successes for the Member States. In the same way, the cases in which the United Nations has been unable to find solutions to existing problems have also been our responsibility. All of us make up the United Nations; its failures are our failures, as its successes are our successes.

Terrorism is a clear example of this and of the need to react together resolutely. Each terrorist attack is an attack against us all, and we must all react. Terrorists do not respect borders; borders should therefore not constitute an obstacle to the collective fight against this scourge. Are there any today who still think that this problem does not, or will not, affect them?

The United Nations is aware of the gravity of the threat that this scourge poses to the principles that underpin the Charter and that are the foundation of our civilization. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) has put international cooperation against terrorism on a substantially different level. That resolution charts the course for the cooperation that is essential for the international community to be able to deal with those who attack our most essential values: life, freedom and democracy.

The growing importance of law has a very direct bearing upon the intense activity of the Organization in favour of human rights. In this context, allow me to focus on a heinous and silent violation of human rights: domestic violence. This scourge primarily affects women, children and older persons — the most vulnerable sectors of society in all our cultures, regardless of level of development or social well-being. How can we explain, shamefully ignore and, thus, in indirectly accept, that violence against women should today be the cause of more death and disability than cancer, traffic accidents or even war? Can we tolerate this situation? As a woman and as a human being, I say that the answer is an unambiguous no.

In the same vein, the International Criminal Court is an essential legal instrument to ensure that the most serious violations of human rights do not go unpunished. With its subsidiary jurisdiction, the Court represents the most significant advance in the

structuring of the international community since the San Francisco Charter.

In the framework of this reinvigoration of law, the Organization must pay special attention to challenges stemming from new technologies, in particular those associated with biotechnology. We do not want uncontrolled science with unclear objectives to determine the future shape of our societies, bringing to life the terrifying allegory of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Spain, which along with other countries of the European Union has ratified the Oviedo Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, a protocol to which bans cloning for research purposes, recalls the fact that article 11 of the Universal Declaration on The Human Genome and Human Rights, approved by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1997 and unanimously endorsed by the General Assembly in 1998, already bans human cloning for reproductive purposes. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond that prohibition in a new convention.

In spite of these encouraging results, underdevelopment, poverty, the existence of weapons of mass destruction and regional crises — in particular the crisis in the Middle East — constitute some of the outstanding tasks before us. Allow me briefly to review these issues in order, in the words of Pablo Neruda, "not to fill our hearts with salt, but to walk in knowledge."

In the difficult struggle for development, we should all invest both our efforts and our hopes. In that regard, I would like to reiterate what was said yesterday with regard to the Monterrey and the Johannesburg summits and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for poverty is fought by recognizing human rights and freedoms and by promoting the rule of law.

In mentioning development, I wish to stress once again the importance of women in the world. Their lagging behind, and their explicit or implicit secondary status — their role in general — are very often patently unfair. This situation is the source of the shortcomings of many societies. Let us recall that the advancement of women is not only an obvious right, it also likely represents the most effective and promising strategy to cope with the persistent nightmare of underdevelopment.

In any case, poverty must be eradicated wherever it exists, both in the poorest countries as well as in middle-income countries, which are joining the global economy while undergoing fragile political and economic processes. Middle-income countries frequently have large pockets of poverty and are especially vulnerable to global economic swings. Latin America is a good example of a continent where in the last decade an important and successful effort has been made to put in place democratic regimes, foster economic growth and open up to the world economy. It is crucial to ensure continued international support when this process is threatened by temporary difficulties.

Disarmament no doubt poses another challenge for all of us, notwithstanding the progress made in the areas of anti-personnel mines, small arms and chemical weapons. In this context, Spain is following with understandable concern the development of events regarding Iraq. For the sake of international security and stability and for the welfare of the Iraqi people, we hope that the announced immediate and unconditional return of arms inspectors in accordance with Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999) will become a reality. The Iraqi regime is currently flagrantly violating those resolutions. Arms inspections must be accompanied by Iraqi guarantees to the international community that it will destroy its weapons of mass destruction. That is the only possible path towards lifting the sanctions and normalizing Iraq's relations with the international community. If necessary, the international community must assume its responsibilities and ensure compliance with the resolutions adopted by the body that embodies international legitimacy.

The citizens of our States fail to understand why some regional crisis continue indefinitely, causing despair among the peoples who suffer from them and generating a sense of injustice that fuels hatred and bitterness. Encouraging progress has undoubtedly been made, especially in Africa, and we spoke of that progress yesterday. But the Middle East crisis continues to be in all our minds.

Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1397 (2002), the principles of the Madrid Conference and the agreements between the parties have established a framework for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. How many Palestinians and Israelis will still have to die and how many

international resolutions will we need before Palestine and Israel can live together as States in peace and mutual respect? It is necessary to complete the peace process; that is the goal of the negotiating efforts of the Quartet, which Spain supports.

We must counter these crises with our ability to carry out dialogue and negotiation. Spain has promoted integration mechanisms, particularly in the Mediterranean region through the Barcelona process. In that regard, Spain has always given special attention to its contacts with the Arab world, with which it maintains special relationships. In that context, I would like to make a brief reference to our relations with the Maghreb.

Spain is among the Maghreb's foremost commercial partners, in addition to being one of the main investor countries there. Hundreds of thousands of citizens from Maghreb countries live in Spain, making up Spain's largest resident foreign community and contributing to the creation of wealth through their work and dynamism. Spain has therefore for many years made the Maghreb the main focus of its international cooperation policy.

All of this means that maintaining strong and fruitful relations with Morocco is a strategic priority of Spanish foreign policy. The clearest expression of that priority is the treaty of friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness that exists between our countries. The Government of Spain wishes to promote relations in all areas and once again to place those relations on the level they deserve, given the proximity of our two peoples and the importance of our common interests. I am confident that my Moroccan colleague's next visit to Madrid will be a good opportunity to make progress along that path.

In any case, I wish to clearly emphasize here today that the autonomous communities of Ceuta and Melilla are an integral part of Spain, on an equal footing with the rest of Spain's autonomous communities. They are therefore an integral part of the European Union. Their citizens are represented in the Spanish and European Parliaments, with the same standing and in the same manner as the rest of our citizens.

The tasks before the Organization require that its mechanisms function adequately. Spain looks forward to the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on the reform of the Organization. We support in-depth reform of the Security Council that addresses all aspects of the matter.

Before ending my statement, I cannot fail to mention the question of Gibraltar and the recurrent mandates of the General Assembly urging Spain and the United Kingdom to continue their bilateral negotiations to find a permanent solution to this dispute. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that during the past year the Governments of both countries have deployed intense negotiating efforts in this regard, and that we have made substantial progress. We intend to continue these negotiations in a constructive spirit so that as soon as possible we may reach a satisfactory and comprehensive agreement that takes into account the legitimate interests of the residents of the colony as well as the traditional United Nations doctrine with regard to Gibraltar, a doctrine confirmed year after year by the resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Special Committee of 24.

Let us be clear: now, the beginning of the twenty-first century, is the time to resolve this question, in accordance with the relevant resolutions calling for the implementation of the principle of territorial integrity. For all of those reasons, we condemn attempts to interfere with the natural development of such negotiations, actions that openly and flagrantly violate that doctrine.

I cannot conclude without giving a very warm welcome, and offering my country's cooperation, to Switzerland, as well as to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, which will soon become a Member of the United Nations.

Our meetings within this building give rise to many plans, ideas and, of course, words. But they also give rise to action. The action of the United Nations, as well as that of each of its Member States, must not be confined within these walls; millions of people depend on our ability to implement all that has been discussed here in order to enjoy a better life or simply to protect the life they have. Spain is fully aware of this responsibility and we are ready to work alongside other Members of the Organization so that words may be transformed into deeds, and deeds transformed into results.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

Mr. Sathirathai (Thailand): I would like, on behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I am confident that, under your able leadership and guidance, this session will build upon the momentum and efforts of previous endeavours and reach a fruitful conclusion.

I also wish to commend your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, whose tireless efforts guided us through the past eventful year.

We look forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations. Thailand is honoured to have actively participated in the United Nations operations in East Timor from the very beginning. Thailand's role in East Timor was unique in linking the peacekeeping mission to development and poverty eradication.

I would also like to congratulate Switzerland on becoming a new Member of the family of this world body. Switzerland is hardly a stranger to the United Nations system; its support has been long standing. I am certain that the two new Members will further contribute to the universality and the work of the United Nations.

As we remember, one year on, the horrendous terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, we share the grief and painful awareness of the impact of that heinous crime on global security and stability. One year on, we are still witnessing the development of conflicts, threats of terrorism and the challenge of how to deal with errant members of the international community. Indeed, the post-11-September world must rely much more on the role of the multilateral mechanism to promote peace, security and prosperity in the international community. More than ever before, today's terrorism continues to be a threat to human security and global economic stability.

As the Secretary-General so rightly said, that tragic incident and its repercussions required a broad, sustained and global response. Thailand fully endorses his call for the international community to use multilateral institutions effectively to respond to the global scourge of terrorism. Thailand condemns terrorism and supports all United Nations actions against it. Moreover, the Thai Government is determined to push ahead with the necessary steps, in terms of its domestic legislation and regulations, so as to enable Thailand to become a party to all the international conventions relating to terrorism. We are working closely with the Counter-Terrorism Committee to implement Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). There is to date no indication whatsoever that there is any trace of terrorist capability in Thailand. We are making sure that no terrorist activities or networks can be harboured in our territory.

The Association of South-East Asian Nations and United States Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism also demonstrates our common and regional resolve to fight terrorism.

Obviously we cannot take peace for granted. The uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are growing threats to world peace and security. The indispensable role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security must gain support from every member of the community.

In order to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and pave the way for their reduction and eventual elimination, the multilateral security system must be effectively complied with. In this regard, we urge Iraq to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions unconditionally and unreservedly, in accordance with its responsibilities. At the same time, we are also convinced that diplomatic efforts, undertaken within the United Nations framework, are desirable and will be the most effective means of reaching a favourable solution and so preventing the escalation of this crisis. Therefore, while we view as a positive development yesterday's letter to the Secretary-General, undertaking to allow United Nations weapons inspectors back into Iraq, we, together with other nations, expect Iraq fully to live up to the solemn undertaking that it has given to the world body.

While effective multilateral mechanisms are the key to the maintenance of international peace and security, it is also the responsibility of each and every member of the international community to bring about and uphold peace. It is also the responsibility of each and every State to ensure that peace, once restored, will last.

In this regard, Thailand is honoured to be hosting the current peace negotiations between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,

being held from 16 to 18 September. We hope to facilitate the peace talks with a view to bringing a lasting solution to this longstanding conflict and to ending the suffering that has resulted.

As part of the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, Thailand has pledged to share its experience and knowledge in the reduction of opium cultivation through the crop substitution programme under the renowned project sponsored by His Majesty the King. That is part of the global effort to sustain peace in Afghanistan, as the scourge of drugs threatens peace and stability.

The current Thai Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, is determined to see the Thai people enjoy the benefits of freedom from fear and want. Human security has therefore been declared one of the Government's most important policies. Thailand believes that we will be one of the first countries in the world to set up a ministry of human security for that specific purpose. The ministry is due to be inaugurated next month. Thailand is also proud to be one of the 13 members of the Human Security Network, whose work is well under way.

The scourge of drugs deprives our people of both freedom from fear and freedom from want, and poverty remains a major threat to human security. Since taking up office early last year, the current Thai Government has waged war against drugs and poverty with the resolute determination to win. We are not doing it alone. Our partnerships to tackle the global threat of drugs — partnerships formed within bilateral, regional and international cooperative frameworks, such as the United Nations International Drug Control Programme — have been fruitful. An initiative of Thailand, the quadrilateral cooperation among China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand to prevent and suppress the production and trafficking of drugs is making progress, particularly in combating the spread of methamphetamines. The leaders of our four countries will meet at an appropriate time to provide much-needed political impetus at the highest level.

The issue of HIV/AIDS is another major transnational threat to human security. Thailand has forged partnerships with its neighbouring countries, particularly the greater Mekong subregion, as well as a partnership with related United Nations agencies and with the members of the Human Security Network to tackle this global epidemic. At the XV International Conference on AIDS, to be hosted by Thailand in 2004, we hope to share our experiences in addressing the multifaceted aspects of HIV/AIDS, namely, prevention, treatment, care and support, as well as research and development.

Even if the war against poverty is Thailand's major priority, the eradication of poverty is not any country's exclusive agenda. Rather, it is an agenda for all mankind. The United Nations millennium development goals have rightly placed the interests and welfare of the people at the core of socio-economic development. Since their adoption, several events under the United Nations framework have taken place to ensure sustainable development.

Our children must inherit the world in at least no worse a shape than it is in today, if not a better and more livable one.

From Brussels to Doha and Monterrey to Johannesburg, the resolve and commitment of the international community to advance towards achieving the millennium development goals for sustainable development have been clearly mobilized. The Monterrey consensus has provided a road map for fostering more effective partnership and greater policy coherence amongst Governments and financial and trade institutions. The international trade and financial environment must be developed to better serve sustainable development.

Greater market access for developing countries' exports forms part and parcel of making the Doha round a truly development round. The G8's decision to resist protectionist pressure is a positive step forward. Equally important is the role of foreign direct investment, which requires rechannelling in order not only to meet the development goals of the host country, but also to promote investors' corporate accountability and social responsibility.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg was, indeed, a historic event. Thailand gladly welcomes the adoption of the Political Declaration and the Plan of Implementation, particularly their emphasis on poverty reduction, which binds the three pillars of sustainable development. The Summit underscored a range of principles, such as self-help and common but differentiated responsibilities, to make sustainable development a reality for mankind. Enhanced coordination and coherence amongst

Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders are crucial to providing the necessary synergies in achieving our common goals.

The principle of partnership as enunciated at Monterrey and echoed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development is being implemented. Thailand is proud to be cited as one of the concrete examples of countries that have succeeded in their coordination and partnership efforts in capacity-building. As a result of the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in Thailand in 2000, the International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD) has been established in Bangkok. ITD is a Thailand-UNCTAD partnership to enhance the productive capacity and trade-negotiating skills of developing countries as they prepare for the new round of global trade negotiations.

Capacity-building is crucial if developing countries are to participate effectively in defending and advancing their interests both in bilateral and multilateral free-trade arrangements, where, increasingly, non-tariff barriers are often found in the guise of environmental measures. In this aspect, ITD can serve as a useful linkage between UNCTAD, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme for capacity-building in trade negotiation. Thailand urges Member States to consider the best use of this Thailand-UNCTAD Institute.

As an item on the world agenda, poverty eradication can never succeed unless there are genuine efforts at the neighbour, regional and global levels. The Mekong subregion is another example of self-help and partnership among developing countries. The road map for opportunities to advance economic integration in that subregion is now taking shape. The commercial routes — the routes of economic opportunities providing transportation linkages — are being established with the partnership of donor countries and the Asian Development Bank. From East to West — from Viet Nam, Laos and Thailand to Myanmar and India — and from North to South — from southern China, Myanmar and Laos to Thailand — these road linkages are now the new lifelines for the future prosperity of the region. They will bring about access to markets, capital and knowledge for sustainable development.

Based on the same principle of creating opportunities in the region for economic progress, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra took the initiative, with the support and participation of 18 Asian nations, to turn Asia's rich diversity into collective strength by creating synergy from an Asia-wide partnership known as the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). Launched in June this year, with its original members ranging from the West to the North-East of the Asian continent and with its core principles of positive thinking, ACD is envisaged as an evolving, informal, non-institutionalized, open, inclusive and incremental process.

ACD's strength is to build upon multiple layers of strategic partnerships in practical areas of cooperation, such as the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism, transportation linkages, agriculture and poverty eradication. We hope that ACD will help enhance Asia's economic competitiveness, open up business opportunities and make Asia a stronger partner for both our developed and developing partners. After the success of its inaugural ministerial meeting in Cha-Am, Thailand, in June, Thailand will be host once more to the ACD meeting next year to move our cooperation forward.

International and regional partnerships, as well as commitments to sustainable development, are not enough. They must be reinforced by partnerships and policies at the national level. The goals and methods contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation are being pursued as part of our development strategy. The present Thai Government is pursuing a development strategy of enhancing international competitiveness and domestic productivity through mobilizing both domestic and external sources of growth for balanced and sustainable development.

This balanced development strategy has been inspired by His Majesty the King of Thailand's philosophy of "sufficiency economy". The main principle of this approach to development is adherence to a middle path at the level of the individual, families and communities. This involves strengthening the grass-roots economy to build its immunity against the adverse impact of global volatility, as well as to enhance its ability to benefit from the multilateral trading system.

Thailand places people at the forefront of its development efforts. Their livelihood must entail human development and community participation. This Government is making progress in its programmes and

measures to improve the quality of life of the Thai people. They include the provision of health care for all, a three-year debt suspension for farmers, the establishment of microcredit facilities, such as the People's Bank, for small entrepreneurs, and the launching of a village and urban revolving fund to provide financial support for local initiatives. In enhancing human potential and innovation, 12 years of free education for all are guaranteed by our Constitution. This goes along well with the recent recommendation by the G8 Education Task Force on education in developing countries.

As a result of lessons learned from past history, the Charter of the United Nations prescribes the multilateral structure of this institution as the best means to maintain international peace and security as well as to advance social and economic development and prosperity. It remains the tasks and duties of this institution and its Member States to continue performing to achieve the Charter objectives. Peace, however, cannot be enforced, but must be cultivated through tolerance and respect for each other. Prosperity, on the other hand, cannot be obtained without creating opportunities from the diverse strengths of each other. Those tasks and duties, therefore, do not merely involve the compliance by each Member State with the United Nations multilateral mechanism; they also include our forging cooperation and partnership at all levels among all stakeholders. For its part, Thailand remains firmly committed to achieving global peace and prosperity by working with other States regionally and universally within the United Nations framework. We have faith that, ultimately, through this multilateral institution we shall build the world best suited for us and our children to live peacefully and harmoniously.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Khvostov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Khvostov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. I believe your extensive diplomatic experience will continue the successful and useful work done by your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo.

Belarus welcomes the further expansion of the community of nations. We welcome the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations membership. We believe that the new Member State and the United Nations will be good partners and will contribute to peace and progress in the world.

The last session of the General Assembly was a landmark for all of us. Last year the world changed dramatically. The challenges of globalization have turned out to be more serious than they seemed to all of us when leaders of the Member States adopted the Millennium Declaration.

The tragic events of 11 September 2001 were a serious test of the stability of the United Nations and our commitment to the principles and objectives of the Charter. We bow our heads in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks. The American tragedy must never be allowed to be repeated anywhere in the world. The President of the Republic of Belarus, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, wrote in a letter dated 11 September 2002, to President George Bush of the United States:

> "Today we still bear in our hearts the memory of the innocent people who perished in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania on that dreadful morning of 11 September 2001 ... Early in the twenty-first century the world perceived the grave reality of new challenges and threats. We also came to understand that the evil of international terrorism can be eradicated only through joint concerted efforts."

Today, we have every reason to state that the world community has managed to confront the threat of global terrorism by creating a broad international coalition. The measures taken by the United Nations in response to the unprecedented acts of international terrorism mark a new and significant direction in the Organization's activities.

Belarus considers itself an integral part of the anti-terrorism coalition. We fully support the Counter-Terrorism Committee and have been actively involved with it in the context of unconditional implementation of Security Council resolutions. We also believe the Counter-Terrorism Committee provides a fruitful exchange of experience in the area of combating terrorism that involves the Member States, international organizations and regional institutions.

The President, Government and Security Council of the Republic of Belarus have been focusing on ways to combat terrorism. In January 2002, we adopted a law to combat terrorism, which has entered into force. Our

country is a party to 9 of the 12 major multilateral international treaties on combating terrorism. We are now working on accession to the three other treaties. The outcome of the groundbreaking work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee will serve as a basis for setting up a universal model for counter-terrorism legislation and for its implementation.

The Republic of Belarus will contribute to elaborating a comprehensive convention on combating international terrorism and acts of nuclear terrorism. Work on those two instruments should be the focus of the Secretary-General's attention, since international terrorism today has challenged two Powers, two permanent members of the Security Council: the United States and Russia. It has also challenged the entire international community. We have accepted that challenge; our response is clear. We, the United Nations, will eliminate terrorism.

The focus of attention at the last session was people and their needs in a global world; we agree with that approach. The Millennium Declaration is our guide as we work on those issues. We considered possible options for implementing the Millennium Declaration at two recent important international forums — the International Conference on Financing for Development at Monterrey and the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg. Those two forums marked a transition between identifying common goals and actually implementing them. The main task facing this session is to draw conclusions with regard to that work and determine the specific actions to be taken in order to implement the agreements. Our delegation is ready to act together with other Member States to this end.

My Government attaches paramount importance to integrating environmental and social aspects into our national strategy for sustainable development.

Belarus agrees with the analysis made at the Johannesburg Summit of what has been done to achieve sustainable development over the past decade and how we can tackle global issues in the twenty-first century.

Our country is entering the new millennium as an important geopolitical element in a modern Europe. We have a stable economic and social infrastructure and the highest human development index among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Belarus seeks constructive interaction and mutually beneficial partnership with our neighbouring countries in the interest of building a united Europe. The prospect of sustainable development in Europe cannot be realized without a stable Belarus acting as a reliable Eurasian bridge. On that basis, our President and Government have been determining the role that Belarus will play in the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The conferences at Monterrey and Johannesburg showed the importance of taking into account the interests of countries with transitional economies in structuring a stable world for the twenty-first century. Over the past decade, our countries have come a long way in transitioning to the market economy and integrating fully into international trade, economic and financial systems. But the States in that group are at different stages of macroeconomic and financial stability and sustained economic growth because of the particular characteristics of their individual situations owing to internal and external factors.

Therefore, it is important to continue international efforts to make market reforms irreversible in the countries with transitional economies. We must also take account of and try to mitigate the social consequences and ensure that our countries are fully integrated into the world economy. Belarus looks forward to a fruitful discussion of the draft, which we will be introducing at this session of the General Assembly.

Sustainable development in Belarus relates directly to dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the largest radiation disaster of the past century. Economic damage in Belarus is estimated at $US 235 billion. We have invested $US 13 billion in restoring the social and economic sectors of that region. The health of the affected population is still a serious concern. At the same time, Chernobyl-related issues have been losing the attention of the international community, leaving Belarus to face the consequences alone. Belarus has urged a shift in focus of international Chernobyl-related cooperation away from humanitarian assistance to socio-economic rehabilitation and sustainable development in the affected regions.

We welcome the active role played by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Kenzo Oshima, who personally visited the

affected regions earlier this year. We are grateful to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for supporting Mr. Oshima in this endeavour. We welcome the work of some members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl, who seek to set up an International Chernobyl Research Board to study the long-term consequences of radiation effects on human beings and the environment in Belarus.

Belarus supports United Nations partnership with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. We believe this can help to mobilize additional resources for our purposes. However, voluntary initiatives should supplement intergovernmental agreements, not replace them.

Peace, security and stability are prerequisites to sustainable development. But this past year has shown that international peace and security are still fragile. We witnessed a sharp escalation of confrontation in the Middle East. This region could become the centre of a dangerous collision between civilizations.

The Middle East Quartet, with the participation of the United Nations, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United States, inspires some optimism from the standpoint of the understanding reached by all participants in the peace process that two independent states — Israel and Palestine — have to coexist. This understanding is enshrined in legally binding documents of the United Nations. Gradually taking steps to mutual reconciliation through continuous dialogue between the parties involved will help, and the United Nations must be active here.

There is no alternative to the peace process in Afghanistan. Significant financial, material and human resources have already been allocated to Afghanistan to help to create a new Afghanistan, a stable and predictable partner in modern international relations. Belarus wishes to make its contribution. Our State Aviation Committee has participated in transporting humanitarian supplies from Europe to Afghanistan.

We believe the establishment of the African Union was a landmark step for Africa. This major regional association, with support from the international community, will hasten a solution to African problems, particularly ethnic and religious conflict. Belarus will help to approve projects and programmes for economic and humanitarian development in Africa through the United Nations.

This year was marked by important agreements on strategic stability. Belarus welcomes the signing in Moscow of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions between the Russian Federation and the United States. We support constructive dialogue between the nuclear States in order to create a genuinely safe multi-polar world.

International efforts for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) must continue. A new impetus must be given to the Conference on Disarmament. More work must be done on reducing conventional weapons.

Belarus has contributed to setting up the new security architecture from Vancouver to Vladivostok by depositing our ratification instruments for the Open Skies Treaty in November 2001.

At this session, we will be proposing a draft resolution entitled "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons". We trust it will be unanimously supported, as it was last year in the General Assembly.

Belarus believes the Security Council must play a key role in maintaining international peace and security, including the situation of Iraq. Belarus welcomes the recent decision by the Government of Iraq to allow for the immediate and unconditional return of United Nations weapons inspectors to Iraq.

Any action or attempt to evade the authority of the United Nations Security Council, or any non-fulfilment by States of decisions by the Council, will undermine the legal basis of the existing system of international relations and jeopardize the basis of the international legal order.

Reform of the United Nations is essential to successfully accomplish its tasks. As a founding member, Belarus has always advocated strengthening the role of the United Nations. In an era of globalization, only an institutionally strong Organization will be capable of making a genuinely effective contribution to coordinating member States' efforts to attain the noble goals enshrined in the Charter.

Although there has not been much progress in the Working Group on Security Council reform and on increasing the Council's membership, Belarus welcomes the progress made in improving its working

methods by increasing transparency and having more open meetings and briefings. Reform of the General Assembly is also speeding up, and informal consultations should serve as a basis for effective work at this session.

We have been monitoring the work of the Economic and Social Council, and we welcome internal reforms there. We support more interaction between the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly. We welcome the coordinating role of the Council as set forth in the Charter and the Millennium Declaration.

As we look at what we have done and what remains to be done, we inevitably reach the conclusion that there is little time for thought due to the speed at which the world is changing today; therefore, we believe that the only key to success is to purposefully move forward to solve specific tasks. Belarus will work together with other member States to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dah Ould Abdi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritania.

Mr. Abdi (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your experience and wisdom, already well-proven, will ensure the success of this session. I would also like to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his able guidance of the work of the last session. Also, I would like to congratulate the Swiss Confederation and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on their admission to membership in the United Nations.

I would also like to congratulate most warmly our United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and the United Nations staff for their excellent work in promoting the noble goals of this Organization.

We note with satisfaction the significant activities and the commendable international conferences held this past year, primarily the United Nations Conference on HIV/AIDS in New York, the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Such international conferences have placed the world before its collective responsibilities in dealing with core issues that require global solutions. What is at stake is the equilibrium and future of the world. This session is being held one year after the criminal attacks against New York and Washington. I would like to confirm once again that Mauritania totally condemns those terrorist acts. We condemn terrorism in all its forms. Mauritania will be actively involved in regional and international initiatives to combat that pernicious phenomenon. We reconfirm our full support for the relevant Security Council resolutions and are resolved to implement them, specifically resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001.

The tragic events highlighted a new reality. Terrorism, instead of being a marginal phenomenon, has become a core issue ignoring borders and which can only be combated through a global strategy. Nobody should believe that fighting terrorism is a clash between two civilizations or cultures. Rather, we must act together to show that the elimination of terrorism is a new step taken by the human race towards further developing its comprehensive, all-inclusive civilization and attaining its aspirations for a safe and better future.

In order to achieve peace and security, the United Nations must play an ever-larger part to strengthen international law. We noted the sustained efforts and the repeated calls for peace in the Middle East. We believe the Arab countries' initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit offers the ideal framework for comprehensive and lasting peace that will ensure progress and prosperity for all peoples in the region. We noted with great interest the vision of the President of the United States of America, Mr. George Bush, who spoke of the need for the coexistence of two independent States, Palestine and Israel, and efforts by the Quartet and the European Union with a view to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. This play is pursuant to the terms of reference of Madrid and the land-for-peace principle and is also in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978. We reiterate the need for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from all territories of the Palestinian Authority, an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and the immediate resumption of peace negotiations. This is the only way to have peace and security in the Middle East.

We hope to see a return to peace, stability and harmony in the Gulf region. We oppose the use of force against Iraq and affirm our support for a peaceful

solution to settle the crisis in accordance with international law.

We are concerned that there should be respect for the independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait, and respect for the independence and territorial integrity of Iraq. Once again we call for the lifting of the embargo against the Iraqi people, which has now been in place for more than 12 years.

With regard to Western Sahara, we support the efforts by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, James Baker, to find a definitive solution to insure stability in the region, one that would be accepted by all of the parties.

On developments pursuant to the Lockerbie crisis, we welcome the significant steps taken by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to find a diplomatic solution to the problem. We think it is now up to the Security Council to take the necessary steps to lift the embargo imposed on Libya.

Turning to our own continent, Africa, we welcome the birth of the African Union, which will be a framework for enabling the African peoples to achieve their aspirations for progress and development. We also support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which seeks to strengthen regional cooperation to achieve economic integration, and we welcome the support given to this initiative by our development partners.

Mauritania reiterates its support for the People's Republic of China, the sole legitimate representative of the Chinese people, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) of 1971. Mauritania welcomes the efforts made by the Government of the People's Republic of China for the peaceful reunification of that country.

We have now seen it proven that violence and extremism result from poverty and despair. The international community must therefore make more efforts in the areas of human solidarity and social progress everywhere in the world. We call for the necessary assistance to be provided to the countries of the South and for the opening of the markets of the developed countries to the products of developing countries. Investment opportunities in developing countries should be increased.

Despite the huge challenges and a difficult economic international situation, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has taken major steps towards development and construction, as noted by our President at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. We have established solid foundations for sustainable development and have developed a clear-cut strategy to combat poverty.

We have taken steps towards comprehensive education, health care and other social services for our people such as drinking water, electricity and communications. Illiteracy and ignorance are major obstacles to development. We have launched broad literacy and education campaigns for our citizens. We have been able to do this because of our pluralist democratic system, which insures freedoms and human rights in an atmosphere of security and stability.

The United Nations Charter seeks common goals of freedom and solidarity for all people. New developments in the international arena in the last few years require our Organization, including the Security Council, to adapt to changes. Today, more than ever before, we must comply with the commitments we made to achieve a new world order based on justice and rights law, to ensure peace, security and dignity for all.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Worship of Argentina, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Ruckauf.

Mr. Ruckauf (Argentina) *(spoke in Spanish)*: First, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Argentina welcomes the fact that a distinguished representative of the Czech Republic has been given this distinction.

The Argentine Republic rejoices with the United Nations at the entry of Switzerland as a new Member of the Organization. The independence of East Timor, the formation of its first sovereign Government and its coming membership in the United Nations are the result of the struggle of that country for its right to self-determination. We welcome this young nation that is now incorporating into international life.

Argentina wishes to express its special gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for translating, through his actions and his continuing search for peace, the aspirations of the international community striving to build a more secure and stable world.

One year after the criminal terrorist attacks in the United States, we reiterate our solidarity with the people and the government of this friendly country, and with the victims and their families. Terrorism is the child of political or religious fanaticism. We are convinced that international cooperation has to be strengthened in the fight against any terrorist threat, so as to eliminate that threat, which endangers peace and international security, and ensure that those responsible for those attacks are tried and punished along with those who help them and support them. There is no justification, nor will there be any, for these barbaric actions that bring shame upon mankind.

It is not a good thing when some Member States do not abide by United Nations resolutions. It is intolerable that these resolutions remain unimplemented when issues related to the very existence of mankind on the planet are involved. The existence of arsenals with bacteriological, chemical and other similar weapons that can be used in a traditional or terrorist war is a matter that affects all men, women and children of the world.

My country, along with the rest of the international community, has consistently called on the Government of Iraq to accept immediately and unconditionally the United Nations inspectors. These inspectors represent all of us inspecting one of us. There are no reasons to refuse the inspections if there is nothing to conceal.

Therefore, Argentina welcomes the announcement made by the Secretary-General that Iraq finally agreed to let the inspectors in without conditions. We hope that Iraq fulfils its promise in good faith, and we very warmly congratulate the League of Arab States and the Secretary-General for making this effort towards peace. The main concern at the United Nations for peacekeeping and for maintaining international security has made significant strides, even though some situations of extreme gravity and with high potential for conflict still exist and have not been solved.

The promising events related to the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that we discussed yesterday, contrast with the worsening situation in the Middle East. The Argentine Government is following with pain and great concern the acts of violence in that region. We are convinced that no possible solution will result from the indiscriminate and brutal use of force through deliberate assassinations or through terrorist attacks against civilians. The only road to peace and stability is through dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore we reiterate our position in support of the renewal of negotiations between the parties with the hope for coming to a peaceful, fair and definitive solution to the conflict. This should include the recognition of the undeniable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to form an independent State, as well as the legitimate right of Israel to live within secure and internationally recognized borders. At present, there are several plans for peace in addition to the efforts on the part of the Quartet. All of these initiatives deserve our urgent attention.

At this time, I wish to confirm that, as part of Argentina's dedication to peace, and its desire to contribute to a solution of the serious existing conflicts, our country will continue to provide armed forces and police personnel, as well as civilians, for the peacekeeping operations established by the United Nations Security Council.

We stress again the permanent commitment of Argentine democracy to the international protection of human rights and to the United Nations activities in that field. We wish to mention our satisfaction at the entry into force of the Rome Statute, of which Argentina is a founding party.

Argentina today is going through an exceptionally deep crisis. As for the opening of the country to the world, our country will continue to travel along the path of becoming a part of the concert of nations that exchange goods and services, as it has done uninterruptedly for the last 12 years. Therefore we will continue participating actively in multilateral negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and we will implement a new trade policy, which, as part of an overall State policy, will be aimed at giving the Argentine economy a clear export profile. It is only by generating foreign earnings, as a result of international trade, that it will be possible to have sustained economic growth over time, while making it possible to repay our debts.

The consolidation of this model demands access to the currently restricted markets of developed countries for Argentine products. The objective of improving access to markets in industrialized countries

was, during the Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, precisely the subject of an absolute consensus, since this undertaking was considered essential to eradicate poverty and to start on the road to development.

To bring prosperity to our peoples it is necessary to see these initiatives enacted and not merely considered as proposals. It is necessary for actions to conform, once and for all, to the principles that have been voiced and the commitments that have been made. It is of great importance that tariffs paid for agricultural products be reduced and, simultaneously, that protection mechanisms and subsidies be eliminated. Such subsidies rose in 2000, within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries rose to the staggering figure of 325 billion dollars with respect to agricultural products alone. Of these, 80 per cent were granted by the United States, Japan and the European Union.

It is essential then that the guidelines towards free trade for agricultural products become a reality, allowing the developing countries to stop calling for aid to help them deal with a specific problem, which leads to a vicious circle. As a result, they only increase their already heavy and unbearable debt. They should be allowed to sustain growth by selling their products. In other words, we wish trade rather than aid.

The grave economic situation we are facing has made it difficult for us to fulfil our obligations to this Organization. These difficulties have been presented to the Committee on Contributions, and we hope that it will be adopted by the General Assembly, calling for understanding from countries that are friends of Argentina.

In an environment of acute economic and social crisis, the Government of the Argentine Republic has reaffirmed its firm commitment, in national and international forums, towards the purposes and the programmatic principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. This international agreement, incorporated into our national constitution, is included in the set of values and legal standards that distinguish the Argentine nation.

My country has clearly recognized the rights of children from the time of conception, and stresses the importance of the family in the child's development. Along these same lines we once again insist on the right of those children abducted by one of their parents. In particular, we refer to the painful situation of Karim, Zahira and Sharif, the children of our compatriot Gabriela Arias Uriburu. Unfortunately, despite huge efforts on the part of the family and Argentine officials, no answer has been given by the Kingdom of Jordan to our request for some mechanism that would make possible a stable and permanent relationship between these children and their mother. This position has received the clear support of the meeting of government experts called by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Montevideo, Uruguay.

The Argentine Republic believes that the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, recently held in Johannesburg, constitutes a feasible agreement, upon which it is possible to move forward in the implementation of specific actions in the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

I regret to say that the most important statement at that Summit was made by a group of children, who said: "We ask ourselves whether snow will fall in the middle of summer one day," and "More than words or applause, we need actions." Unfortunately, little specific progress has been made to stop the continuing series of environmental disasters.

As the General Assembly knows well, the Argentine Republic has a sovereignty dispute with the United Kingdom over the Malvinas and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, as well as the surrounding maritime areas. The recovery of full sovereignty over that part of our national territory, while respecting the interests of the inhabitants and international law, is a precept enshrined in the Argentine Constitution. The issue was included in the programme of work of this Organization, which, in several resolutions, asked the Government of Argentina and the Government of the United Kingdom to resume negotiations to find a just and lasting solution to the sovereignty dispute, thus ending a colonial situation imposed by the use of force in 1833.

Today, in line with that request, Argentina once again reaffirms its positive disposition to resume bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom to find a solution to the question and its support of the good offices mission that the General Assembly entrusted to the Secretary-General to assist the parties to achieve that goal.

Some three decades ago, in this same Hall, Pope Paul VI declared from this same rostrum that development is the new name of peace. That brief and wise sentence is fully valid today and points towards the path that we should follow.

The President: I next give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Chairman of the delegation of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar): I would like to thank you, Sir, for giving me the floor. Allow me to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We have no doubt that your experience, wisdom and infinite patience will lead us to a successful outcome of the work of this session. Through you, allow me to congratulate Mr. Hans Seung-soo on his presidency over the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which he conducted with skill and ability. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who leads the Secretariat at a very delicate and difficult time in the history of the Organization, a time when it faces many challenges, pressures and a serious situation of threats to international peace and security.

I am honoured and pleased to congratulate our sister State of East Timor on its independence and accession to the United Nations, which represents the hope of all the peoples of the world to achieve their freedom. I would also like to warmly welcome the Swiss Confederation, which has become a full Member of the United Nations.

Since the convening of the last session, we have seen very important events in the international arena, in the wake of the terrorist attack against the World Trade Centre in New York. That led to unprecedented complications in politics and international relations. Those political and social changes are accelerating and lead daily to new patterns of conflict.

With respect to combating terrorism, Qatar, as the Chair of the ninth Islamic summit, called for an emergency meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Doha in October 2001. That Conference clearly condemned all acts of international terrorism, including State terrorism. It also affirmed the urgent need to agree upon an international definition of terrorism, distinguishing between terrorism and legitimate resistance to foreign aggression and occupation for the purpose of national liberation and self-determination.

I would like to recall from this rostrum that we are fully convinced of the validity of the United Nations Charter and of the leading role played by the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as in ensuring the development, prosperity and dignity of humankind.

Here, we have to refer firmly to the need for the work of the Security Council to be transparent and the need to renounce the selective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Charter. There is no escaping reviewing the permanent membership of the Security Council so that a select few will not be able to continue to use the veto, which can literally invalidate the opinions of all others, while the United Nations preaches democracy, participation, justice and equality.

The practices of the Organization must be completely impartial. The needed measures for the maintenance of international peace and security must be applied to all without exception and without preferential treatment. We cannot allow the resolutions of the Security Council to be based on double standards or to be selective in a way that allows Israel not to implement the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We cannot accept that the people of Palestine and the Arab people in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and in the south of Lebanon are falling prey to the barbaric aggression of the Israeli occupation forces before the eyes of the whole world and world public opinion. Israel violates the resolutions of international law, rejecting them without any reaction from the Security Council or any organs of the United Nations to put an end to it.

We observe closely and with concern the deteriorating security situation in the Palestinian territories and the blatant challenge to the international community and international laws and norms posed by the siege of President Arafat and the legitimate, elected leadership of the Palestinian people. We observe with concern the assassination, abduction and arrest of Palestinian leaders, as well as the demolition of houses on the heads of women, children and the elderly. We watch closely and with concern the attacks on holy places, which have been condemned by all states and representatives of international humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of

the Red Cross, which strongly deplored and condemned those attacks.

The actions of Israeli forces in Jenin and Gaza and the massacres perpetrated there constitute blatant violations of modern international humanitarian law, international human rights and international conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949. If it really intends to achieve security, Israel must take the route of peace by implementing the resolutions of international law: the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. They all provide for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate national aspirations, including self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on its national territory with East Jerusalem as its capital. Those resolutions also call for the withdrawal from the occupied Syrian territory of the Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, as well as from the rest of occupied Lebanese territory.

Among the prerequisites required to ensure a prosperous life for humankind is the basic right to live without discrimination based on ethnicity, race, colour, ideology, language, wealth or social origin.

As a people who believe in a revealed religion, we believe in respecting human rights, because, in addition to our common laws, we have a divine law, laid down in the Koran, that tells us to respect such rights. In Qatar, we protect and maintain human rights and have made them the standard for our religion and for our progress. Many countries accuse certain organizations that profess concern for human rights of bias, selectivity and double standards because they concentrate on political and civil rights without paying any heed to economic, social or cultural rights, which are no less important than civil or political rights. Important as they are, civil and political rights may become devoid of content if we fail to pay heed to the other rights.

Qatar has made many advances in the protection of human rights, of the rule of law and of the principles of democracy and Shura, as well as good governance. We have just completed a new national Constitution that provides for public freedoms and free parliamentary elections. It also, for the first time, gives women the full right to vote and to be represented.

We in the Middle East are threatened by a clear imbalance of power. Israel is the only country in the region that possesses an arsenal of nuclear weapons and refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We appeal to all peace-loving countries to demand that Israel accede to the Treaty and submit its nuclear installations to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

At the present time, we see a positive direction in certain international issues. With regard to the situation in Iraq, we welcome that country's acceptance of the return of international inspectors and its avowed commitment to implement relevant Security Council resolutions and to resume dialogue with the United Nations. We reaffirm the need to maintain Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and we hope that resumed dialogue will lead to a comprehensive solution and to a suspension of — and ultimately an end to — the sanctions, which are causing great suffering among the Iraqi people.

Another example of what the United Nations must do to right current wrongs is the complete lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which has fulfilled its obligations and surrendered the wanted suspects.

As we meet today, developing countries are experiencing serious economic difficulties that are negatively affecting their development in an environment of heavy foreign debt and declining official development assistance. They are also facing restrictions on their exports to world markets and unfair prices for their basic commodities. Africa's economic situation is still very serious, despite all the efforts of African countries and of the international community to overcome that continent's development problems. The economic situation is worsening, and foreign debt is increasing. Whatever economic gains are achieved must therefore be spent on debt servicing and on correcting the imbalance resulting from the reverse flow of resources. Africa is also the continent that is suffering most from HIV/AIDS.

We support the efforts of the Secretary-General, and we greatly value his initiatives to reform the United Nations. With regard to the reform programme proposed in 1997 and approved by the General Assembly, we note with concern that its development goals have yet to be achieved. We have witnessed a

continuous decline in financing that has led to the reduction of development programmes. We believe that the Organization's socio-economic development activities must be given highest priority, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter. Without development, there will no lasting peace or security.

The Millennium Declaration set out many objectives, including that of achieving sustainable economic development and, in particular, sustainable human development, with human beings as its crucial element. Accordingly, human development is the major topic of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council's current substantive session. The Millennium Declaration objectives of eradicating poverty, achieving economic development, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and bringing that disease under control by 2015 all require our concerted effort and political will. In addition, the voluntary contributions and direct financial investment flows of local and international donors are required to achieve the objectives of the Monterrey Conference, the most important of which is the commitment by rich industrialized countries of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. Those countries made the same commitment at previous conferences. Here, I must mention the Doha Conference in the light of the importance it attached to free trade, market liberalization and infrastructure expansion in increasing the competitive ability of developing countries, in particular African countries. That Conference also emphasized the importance of the transfer of information and communications technology, economic diversity, foreign trade and increased market access, as well as increasing flows of foreign resources and reducing debt.

Qatar has always opposed coercive, unilateral sanctions imposed by one single country on another sovereign country over which it has no legal jurisdiction. We believe that imposing sanctions on other countries with a view to serving economic interests or achieving political objectives represents a violation of the principles of equal sovereignty among states and self-determination, as provided for by the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions. Therefore, Qatar reaffirms its categorical rejection of all attempts to implement local laws across borders on the citizens and companies of other States to force those countries to comply with unilateral economic measures that transcend the legal jurisdiction of States. That is in direct violation of international law, of the provisions of the Charter and of the rules of the World Trade Organization.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.